

The Pursuit of National Interests

PART

2

To what extent should national interests be pursued?

The photos here show an expression and a result of extreme forms of nationalism. In the first, a poster reads: “The people rise up. The hour is at hand! Vote for List 1 [the Nazi party list].” The year was 1932 and the German parliamentary election was underway. The Nazis won the election and Hitler soon became chancellor. He demanded justice for Germany and began to plan its expansion. Under what conditions is it acceptable for one nation’s interests to affect another nation? Is it ever acceptable for one nation-state to pursue its national interests at the expense of other nations?

Although the outcome of the First World War had left many Germans in poverty, Germany pursued its national interest and became a powerful and militarized country. How this happened is one of the topics explored in this Part. Under Hitler’s rule, German youth were taught that citizenship was defined by blood, not by geographical borders. Hitler designed an education system dedicated to building a great German empire moulding youth into “ideal” German citizens. In Hitler’s words:

In our eyes the German boy of the future must be slender and supple, swift as greyhounds, tough as leather and hard as Krupp steel. We must bring up a new type of human being, men and girls who are disciplined and healthy to the core.¹

Hitler’s goal, of course, was to pursue the interests of Germany at any cost—even the cost of war.

In the second photograph, a child looks at the remains of the approximately 25 000 Tutsis and many sympathetic Hutus who were massacred in and around the Nyamata Catholic Church in Rwanda in 1994. What could have happened during the time leading up to the genocide, a massacre carried out with machetes during 100 days of rampage that led to the deaths of more than 800 000 people? As you can see from the graphic of the Chapter Issues, in Part 2 you



¹ From: citized.info/pdf/commarticles/The Individual Society and Community.doc.

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will explore the extent to which a form of nationalism called *ultranationalism* contributes to extreme acts such as genocide. How is it that so many people participate, seemingly willingly, in this systematic destruction of human life? Why does nationalism sometimes become ultranationalism? Why does ultranationalism sometimes result in genocide?

In Part 2 you will investigate why and how nations pursue their national interests, and the consequences of this pursuit. You will examine historical and contemporary examples, Canadian as well as international. Three examples will help you understand the relationship between ultranationalism and genocide: Nazi extremism, the 1932–1933 famine in Ukraine, and the genocide in Rwanda.

Some Key Understandings in Part 2 consider the pursuit of *self-determination*, a nation's moral and legal right to determine its political status and to be a nation-state. How far should a nation go to pursue what it wants and believes it needs?

The Key Issue for this course asks: ***To what extent should we embrace nationalism?*** In Part 1 you explored the issue by looking at the relationships between nation, identity, and nationalism. Part 2 continues this inquiry by investigating how the pursuit of national interest has shaped our world. The Main Issue for Part 2 is: ***To what extent should national interests be pursued?***

What are national interests, and should every nation try to pursue them in the same way? As you consider the diverse actions by which nations can pursue national interests, your responses to these actions will help you formulate a position on the Main Issue.

Each chapter in Part 2 explores an issue related to the Main Issue: ***To what extent should national interests be pursued?*** The Chapter Issues show that national issues can be pursued by countries as well as by nations within countries. This pursuit, then, can be international, domestic, or both.

